

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ANTLER CYCLE OF HOG-DEER (*AXIS PORCINUS*) IN CAPTIVITY

This communication presents data on antler cycle of Hog-Deer observed at Nandankanan Biological Park, Orissa during the period October, 1970 to March, 1983. The number of Hog-Deer stags under observation varied from one to four.

PERIOD OF ANTLER CASTING

During the observation period twenty antler castings (single spike as well as branched) were recorded during a six month period from October to March as follows: October, 2; November, 1; December, 1; January, 9; February, 6; and March, 1. Peak antler casting (85%) was recorded during winter months (November-February).

Both antlers were cast either in one day or within five days. Casting of antlers of both sides was completed on one day in eight instances (40%), on two consecutive days in six instances (30%), within three days in three instances (15%), within four days in two instances (10%) and within five days in one instance (5%).

According to Asdell (1964) the antlers of this species are shed in April in India but in the Philadelphia Zoo there is a record of a February shedding and in the Washington Zoo there is a record of July shedding. The majority of Hog-Deer of Dhikala, Corbett National Park cast their antlers from February to May (Tak and Lamba 1981). Acharjyo (1971) reports three instances of a stag shedding its antlers in December. He further states that

both the right and left antlers were always shed the same day.

PERIOD OF VELVET RUBBING

As usual with the other species of Indian deer, the Hog-Deer stags rub off the velvet of antlers soon after their growth is completed. The nineteen observations on velvet rubbing were recorded as follows: February, 3; March, 1; April, 6; May, 4; June, 1; July, 1; November, 1; and December, 2. The majority of stags (63.16%) cleared their velvet during summer months (March-June).

The Hog-Deer stags remove velvet during May-August and hard antlers were retained from August-January at Dhikala, Corbett National park (Tak and Lamba, loc. cit.).

TIME TAKEN FOR ANTLER GROWTH

Observations on the period required from the time of casting of antlers to the time when the stag starts rubbing off the velvet is taken as the span of antler growth. This period observed in twelve instances varies from 3 to 4 months (3 months in 4 occasions, 3½ months in 5 occasions and 4 months in 3 occasions).

AGE AT FIRST ANTLER CASTING

Two male Hog-Deer born in the Park in December, 1981 (7.12.1981 and 17.12.1981), started showing knob like pedicels by the end of July, 1982 and rubbed off the velvet in

the second fortnight of December, 1982. Casting of single spike antlers in these two specimens were recorded in the last week of February, 1983. As expected the coronet or burr was absent in single spike antlers.

These observations suggest that the knob like pedicels appear at the age of approximately seven months, rubbing off the velvet starts at the age of about one year and casting of the first set of single spike antlers occurs at the age of about 1 year and 2½ months.

CASTING INTERVAL

The casting interval observed in seven instances among four specimens varies from 338

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to 375 days. The stags cast their antlers annually.

The casting interval reported twice in a stag was 347 and 383 days (Acharjyo, loc. cit.).

SIZE AND WEIGHT OF CAST ANTLERS

Three of the cast single spike antlers measured (weighed) as follows: 6 cm (13.250 gm); 7.5 cm (16.500 gm) and 9 cm (23.200 gm). Maximum length of cast antlers on the outside curve recorded twice was 43 cm each. The maximum weight of two cast antlers of a stag recorded once was 271 gm (right) and 260 gm (left).

The average horns of Indian Hog-Deer measure 30 to 38 cm but the Burmese stags carry antlers upto 61 cm (Prater 1971).

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2. A NOTE ON THE LONGEVITY AND FERTILITY OF THE BLACKBUCK, *ANTILOPE CERVICAPRA* (LINNAEUS)

During my tenure as District Forest Officer of Vellore Division in North Arcot District of Tamil Nadu, in response to my usual ques-

tions about animals, birds, ancient temple ruins, forts etc; inside reserved forests, a Forest Watcher replied that in his jurisdiction there